



**Connecticut Department of Public Health**

**Testimony Presented Before the Children's Committee**

**March 9, 2021**

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**Senate Bill 2, An Act Concerning Social Equity and The Health, Safety and Education of Children**

The Department of Public Health (DPH) supports the concept behind Sections 2 through 9 of Senate Bill 2, which is intended to improve the health and quality of life of children. These sections of the bill require certain licensed health care professionals to complete mental health and suicide screening and prevention training. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

Sections 2 through 9 require several different healthcare professions to complete continuing education units (CEUs) by taking training courses that are not less than two hours and that pertain to screening for conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, risk of suicide, depression and grief as well as suicide prevention training. This must be completed during the first licensure or certification renewal period beginning after January 1, 2022, and not less than once every six years thereafter.

DPH acknowledges the importance of such professionals recognizing behavioral health issues and being equipped with suicide prevention training. However, the Department would like to bring some concerns about the bill's language to the committee's attention. The Department respectfully requests the committee consider substitute language in the following areas:

- Sections 2 through 9 require the Department to approve the aforementioned CEUs taken by each of these professions. DPH does not currently approve programs related to CEUs, as we do not have the resources or expertise to review continuing education programs. Currently, licensees identify opportunities that meet the statutory requirements and best suit their needs. These trainings are typically offered by national and state professional organizations, institutions of higher education, and other entities experienced in providing or approving profession-specific continuing education opportunities. The Department respectfully requests being removed as the entity to "approve" courses.

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- Section 2 requires a physician assistant to complete CEUs on screening for conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, risk of suicide, depression and grief along with suicide prevention prior to initial licensure. Physician assistants do not currently have to complete CEUs. We suggest that the committee should create similar language as found in Section 5 of the bill to outline the new requirements for CEUs for physician assistants. The current language is embedded among the qualifications for initial licensure, and DPH asserts this would be more appropriately outlined in a different subsection of statute specific to licensure renewal.
- The Department recommends inserting substitute language in Section 5:
  - In line 120 of the bill add the words “actively practicing in this state” after the word “statutes”. This will remove the CEU requirement for individuals such as retired nurses still holding a license, or nurses who holds a license in many states but are not practicing in Connecticut.
  - In line 135, the language states that the Commissioner may waive up to “ten” CEUs for nurses. However, nurses are not currently required to complete CEUs upon renewal of their license. The language in the bill mandates nurses to take a minimum of two CEUs, which would satisfy the whole CEU requirement for nurses. The Department respectfully requests the Committee take into consideration changing the word “ten” to “two”.
- Section 6 requires certified nurse aides to complete the aforementioned CEUs. This bill appears to be focused on the well-being of children, and typically a nurse aide would not provide services to children within their current scope of practice. The definition of a nurse aide in Connecticut’s statutes is an individual that is providing nursing or nursing-related services to residents in a nursing home setting.
- Section 9 of the bill requires emergency medical services (EMS) personnel to take the aforementioned CEUs. In order for an advanced emergency medical technician (AEMT) to be licensed, they currently have to hold an emergency medical technician (EMT) license. The language in the bill would require AEMTs to take the behavioral health training twice. The department respectfully request removing this duplicative requirement for AEMTs.

Thank you for your consideration of this information. DPH encourages committee members to reach out with any questions.